

Snow Removal Efforts by Town Crews on Public Roadways

The following information is provided in order to inform our Town of Abingdon residents of snow removal efforts, so they may know what to expect during and after a snow or ice event. It is our hope that this information will answer questions that frequently arise during the winter season, and help our residents and other motorists that use the streets within the Town to be better prepared for roadway conditions.

The Snow Removal Effort, In General

Town crews are responsible for maintenance and snow/ice removal of all of the public streets and roadways within the town corporate limits with a few exceptions, most notably Interstate 81 and its ramps.

The Town gives highest priority for snow/ice removal to the roadways that carry the most traffic. Roadways with highest priority include Main Street, Route 19/Porterfield Highway, Jonesboro Road, Cummings Street, Russell Road, and VHCC Drive/French Moore Boulevard. The goal is to quickly make these roadways passable, and remove the snow/ice to bare pavement as soon as practical considering the duration of the storm, accumulation, and temperatures. On-street parking spaces are not considered highest priority, so they will be treated as weather conditions and priorities allow.

The Town gives second priority for snow/ice removal to major collector streets, including, but not limited to, Whites Mill Road, Wyndale Road, Stonemill Road, Hillman Highway, Valley Street, Court Street, and Walden Road. The goal is to make these roads passable as soon as practical considering the duration of the storm, accumulation, and temperatures.

The Town's third priority for snow/ice removal is all other public roadways, which essentially includes the local and residential roadways. The goal is to make these roads passable within 12 hours of the end of a snow/ice event.

In a typical snow/ice event, all roadways within the Town will have been plowed and treated with salt and/or gravel within 6 hours. **Temperature, storm duration, and the amount of traffic on a roadway will have the most impact on how quickly snow and ice are removed down to bare pavement.** When temperatures are below 20° F, the effectiveness of the salt is greatly diminished. At this point, applying abrasive material such as small gravel to the roadway helps with traction and breaking the snow/ice pack.

As a reminder, even if the roadway appears to be cleared down to bare pavement, motorists should proceed cautiously, assuming that there are still slick areas on the roadway.

Frequently Asked Questions

How much does the Town spend on snow/ice removal?

Where does the Town get the salt for snow removal?

How many people and how much equipment is used to remove snow/ice from the public roadways?

Why is gravel mixed in with the salt?

Trucks drive by with their plows raised, or salt spreaders not engaged – why aren't they plowing or spreading salt?

Why do the plow trucks block my driveway with snow?

How is trash collection affected by snow/ice storms?

How much does the Town spend on snow/ice removal?

The Town currently pays approximately \$120 per ton of salt and over \$14 per ton for small gravel. As recently as Fiscal Year 2007-2008, the Town paid only \$69.64 per ton for salt. Material shortages, more severe winters, and higher processing and delivery costs significantly raised the ultimate cost to consumers like the DOT's and municipalities. In the current fiscal, the Town has a budget of \$30,000 for salt and \$2,500 for gravel in snow/ice removal on public roadways. This does not include the significant cost of Town employees and equipment used in snow removal.

Where does the Town get the salt for snow removal?

We currently purchase salt from VDOT, and we try to replenish our stockpile after each snow/ice event. Availability of salt has become an issue since the 2009-2010 winter. There are times when VDOT has not received salt deliveries to replenish their stockpiles, so we are unable to get additional salt. We have two storage facilities for salt to minimize the chance of running out during a prolonged storm event. If we do run out of salt during a storm, we will continue using the plow trucks and spread gravel as appropriate, but road conditions will be significantly worse without the salt.

How many people and how much equipment is used to remove snow/ice from the public roadways?

The Town has 3 dump trucks and 8 pickup trucks equipped with plows and salt spreaders for our snow removal effort on public roadways. A typical crew during a storm will consist of 1-2 dump truck plows/spreaders and 5-7 pickup plows/spreaders. If there is significant snow accumulation along the roadside after plowing, and it is not likely to melt within a few days, we may bring in a front-end loader and dump trucks to load and transport snow to Town property out of the way of traffic.

Why is gravel mixed in with the salt?

Small gravel is mixed with the salt to help with traction and provide a mechanical means for breaking up the snow/ice on the roadway. Gravel is a much less expensive material than salt; however, it is also much less effective in snow melting.

Trucks drive by with their plows raised, or salt spreaders not engaged – why aren't they plowing or spreading salt?

If you see a Town truck drive by with plow raised and salt spreader not engaged, it is typically due to two factors – either the truck is headed toward a higher priority roadway, or the roadway has already been plowed and treated with salt and we are waiting for the salt to begin melting the snow/ice. It is wasteful and ineffective to spread salt and then plow it away soon after.

Why do the plow trucks block my driveway with snow?

We apologize for this inconvenience, but this is the only practical way to try to clear the roadways of snow and ice for traffic. It is the responsibility of the property owner to clear their driveway if they must get out. If you do remove the snow in front of your driveway, it is best to move it to the right side of your driveway if you are facing the roadway.

How is trash collection affected by snow/ice storms?

We try to collect trash and recyclables on the regularly scheduled day. If our trash truck driver believes a road is not safe or passable, he will make the street superintendent or foreman aware of the concern and a plow truck will be sent as priority allows to improve the roadway condition.